

# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant

A Joint Study Charting the Evolving Role of  
Sunni Foreign Fighters in the Armed Uprising  
Against the Assad Regime in Syria

June 2013

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### I. Introduction: Methods and Sources

Since the beginning of the armed Sunni uprising against the Alawite Assad regime in Syria in 2011, a growing number of foreign fighters from across the Middle East (and indeed, around the world) have eagerly flocked to join the underdog rebels on the battlefield. Any serious effort to study this motley crew of foreign fighters is inherently complex—and has only been made more so by the Bismarckian political alliances of the actors involved, the conflicting propaganda value of the issue to these various actors, and the somewhat secretive nature of the fighters themselves.

It must also begin with an acknowledgement of certain basic underlying caveats. First, Sunni foreign fighters in Syria comprise only a minority fraction of the overall rebel force—most generously, one could estimate 10%. Second, it should be noted too that while foreigners have certainly come to the help of the rebels, the Assad regime has also relied on outsiders—including fighters from recognized terrorist groups like Hezbollah and the PFLP. It is perhaps even arguable that, at present, there are actually more foreign nationals fighting on the side of the Assad regime than with the rebels. Whatever the relative numbers, it is a question that is simply beyond the scope of this particular analysis. Third, while the Assad regime has been quick to portray the entire corpus of Sunni foreign fighters as universally “Wahhabi terrorists and thugs”, the range of motivations pushing outsiders to join in the deadly fray ongoing in Syria is not entirely homogenous—and runs from Arab Spring-motivated, pro-democratic revolutionary

fervor to the most extreme sectarian and hardline Islamist viewpoints imaginable. In addition to the extremists who have joined up with Jabhat al-Nusra or other likeminded outfits, some of the foreign fighters have instead been attached to different Free Syrian Army units or more mainstream Islamist factions like Liwa' al-Ummah. There has been a long list of cases of individuals who were involved in pro-democracy uprisings in Tunisia or Egypt, who then went to Libya to help in the fight against the Qadhafi regime, and finally headed to Syria to finish off the Assad regime.

Nonetheless, despite these important caveats, Syria's foreign fighters have clearly had a significant impact on the evolution of the conflict, and their presence has raised obvious and perhaps natural concerns among international governments about the proliferation of long-term terrorist threats in the region—including the “zombie”-like menace posed by Al-Qaida's nearby network in Iraq. The bleeding wound in the Levant has undoubtedly been transformed into this generation's “jihad of the moment.” It now serves as the latest combat safari tour destination of choice for would-be mujahideen, eclipsing Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, and Somalia—even in the overall historical context. At the very least, the current war in Syria can be considered the third largest foreign mujahideen mobilization since the early 1980s—falling short only of Afghanistan in the 1980s and Iraq during the last decade. The difference this time is that the mobilization has been stunningly rapid—what took six years to build in Iraq at the height of the U.S. occupation may have accumulated inside Syria in less than half that time.

In order to help gauge the importance and demographics of these arriving foreign fighters, we have engaged in an exhaustive ten month joint effort to find and catalogue their biographies, along with photographic and video evidence documenting their personal narratives. Much of this material has come to light after these various men were “martyred” in combat in the form of eulogies posted on password-protected jihadi web forums, Facebook pages, and occasionally through regional media sources. Social networking platforms like Facebook and Twitter have provided a critical online bedrock for foreign fighters in Syria, opening to them a constant avenue for communication and an open path to share critical information, solicit contributions, and recruit fighters. Each day on Facebook, new names and photos of deceased foreign fighters are posted by rebel supporters who hope that their willingness to sacrifice will inspire others to follow in their footsteps. Though there have been multiple major foreign fighter mobilizations within the Sunni Muslim community since the early 1980s, this is the first time that researchers have gained access to such a substantial amount of detailed, original data to analyze. While calculating statistics on a shadow army operating on a chaotic foreign battlefield certainly has its challenges and limitations—and there may be some inherent degree of sample bias in the methods we have used—due to the sheer amount of authentic, credible information (a total of 280 individual fighters over 11 months of conflict, from July 2012 to May 2013) that has been aggregated here from a variety of different streams (traditional media, Internet platforms, and social media) and by multiple independent researchers, there are undoubtedly valuable trends and conclusions that can be extrapolated from it.

## II. Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: Executive Summary

Given the recency of its occurrence and relative geographic proximity, it is appropriate to compare our results to those of prior studies of foreign fighters who joined the jihad in neighboring Iraq. In October 2005, one of the authors of the present report used an analogous methodology to conduct a study of 326 foreign fighters reported killed in Iraq over a 28 month period.<sup>1</sup> Aside from Syrians, the most prominent nationalities of the fighters were Saudi Arabia (52%), Libya, (5%), Kuwait (5%), Jordan (5%), and Lebanon (4%). Only five Tunisian fighters were recorded during the entire study, comprising little more than 1% of the total polling group. The U.S. military drew similar conclusions from the so-called “Sinjar Records”, a cache of highly detailed and revealing personnel files on 595 Al-Qaida foreign fighters in Iraq from 2006-2007.<sup>2</sup> According to researchers at West Point who gained early access to the Sinjar Records, “Saudi Arabia was by far the most common nationality of the fighters’ in this sample; 41% (244) of the 595 records that included the fighter’s nationality indicated they were of Saudi Arabian origin. Libya was the next most common country of origin with 18.8% (112).”<sup>3</sup>

Fast forward to the conflict in Syria and the present study and we find that some trends have stayed constant, while others appear to reflect the changing politics of the post-Arab Spring Middle East. Once again, Saudi Arabia and Libya figure among the most prominent two nationalities of foreign fighters in our data sample—however, this time it is Libya that is the undisputed leader at 21% (59) versus Saudi clocking in at 16% (44). It is hard to dispute the outsized role that Libyan fighters have played in the Syrian uprising. Libyan rebels who fought the Qaddafi regime reportedly were critical in founding a “Muhajireen Brigade” in Latakia comprised entirely of foreign fighters—and indeed, mostly of Libyans. Available evidence suggests that the group has also welcomed fighters from Chechnya, China, and Australia—among other countries—in recent months.

Though some Libyan foreign fighters who have traveled to Syria have been motivated by “revolutionary” as opposed to jihadi principles, this is certainly not the case for all of them. On February 8, 2013, veteran Libyan jihadist “Abu Sa’d al-Liby” was reported killed during fighting in Syria. Long before his bid to fight the Assad regime, Abu Sa’d traveled to Afghanistan, where he fought in jihad and was eventually detained in neighboring Iran. Later, during the height of the Arab Spring, Abu Sa’d attempted traveling on to Yemen in order to join Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)—but was caught and arrested en route in Oman. According to his friends in Syria, the Libyan was eventually transferred from Oman to Dubai, where he was interrogated by U.S. officials before being sent home, ostensibly to end his career in jihad.

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<sup>1</sup> Kohlmann, Evan. “Foreign Fighters Reported Killed in Iraq: June 2003-October 2005.” <http://www.globalterrorismalert.com>.

<sup>2</sup> Fishman, Brian and Joseph Felter. “Al-Qa’ida’s Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records.” West Point Counterterrorism Center (CTC) Harmony Project. January 2, 2007. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-qaidas-foreign-fighters-in-iraq-a-first-look-at-the-sinjar-records>

<sup>3</sup> Fishman, Brian and Joseph Felter. “Al-Qa’ida’s Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records.” West Point Counterterrorism Center (CTC) Harmony Project. January 2, 2007. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/al-qaidas-foreign-fighters-in-iraq-a-first-look-at-the-sinjar-records>

While Saudi nationals no longer dominate the foreign fighter market in the way they once did in Iraq, this should not take away from the importance of the role that they have indeed played in Syria. The Saudis arriving in the Levant include both newer, younger volunteers—as well as those with a long pedigree in the jihadi underworld. On November 24, 2012, Syrian rebel sources announced the “martyrdom” of Saudi national Abdulaziz al-Jughayman, a middle-aged former professor of Shariah law at King Faisal University in al-Ahsa. According to his comrades, al-Jughayman had served at least three prior tours of duty with foreign mujahideen organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kashmir, and Afghanistan—where he had fought immediately following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. Once again, as in Iraq, the names of Saudi nationals have appeared quite frequently as suicide bombers—such as Khalid al-Suwaid, who reportedly carried out a devastating March 2013 suicide bombing in Ghassouleh (Damascus) that is alleged to have killed more than 50 Syrian soldiers. Like quite a number of his Saudi comrades in Syria, al-Suwaid was already a combat veteran, after previously fighting against U.S. forces in Iraq, presumably on behalf of Al-Qaida.

Yet, what would have been a real surprise to many only a year ago is the sudden rush to prominence by mujahideen volunteers from Tunisia in the wake of the Jasmine Revolution. Tunisians have certainly served as foreign fighters in prior jihadi conflicts like Afghanistan and Iraq, but they have proliferated in small numbers with little organization—a stark contrast to what has taken place in Syria. In fact, in the context of our sample study, Tunisian nationals were second only to Libyans at 16% (44)—and even then, not behind by much. During the former reign of Ben Ali prior to the uprising, the regime in Tunis kept a stranglehold on any jihadi activities and arrested scores of individuals for suspected militancy. In contrast, now, groups like Ansar al-Shariah in Tunisia (AST) have had newfound freedom to conduct missionary work, as well as to recruit and incite individuals to fight jihad abroad. Evidence aggregated during the present study indicates that Ansar al-Shariah not only openly celebrates the “martyrdom” of Tunisian Islamists killed fighting in Syria, but moreover, has directly facilitated their departure and travel to the frontline. This is almost certainly one of the principal reasons that so many Tunisians have joined the mobilization to jihad in Syria.

Though the Tunisians who have died fighting in Syria include those with previous frontline experience, the biographies of some of their “martyred” brethren feature a number of unusual would-be jihadists. Tunisian national Muhammad Amin Abdul-Hadi was once a wealthy, well-placed engineer at the Center of Studies and Research for Telecommunications in Sfax, where he had worked for 10 years. His prosperous, successful background offered few clues that Abdul-Hadi would suddenly depart his homeland and join Al-Qaida’s local affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra. On January 27, 2013, he was reported killed during clashes with the Syrian army near Latakia. Four days later, on January 31, rebel sources announced the “martyrdom” of another young Tunisian engineer in Syria, 25-year old Ilyas bin Hamad bin Umara (a.k.a. Abu Hasan al-Tunisi). According to the rebels, Umara had joined the “Syrian jihad” only two months after earning his engineering degree from the Higher Institute of Informatics in Ariana, Tunisia.

Elsewhere in North Africa, Egyptians have and continue to play a noteworthy, if perhaps lesser, role among the foreign fighters, comprising roughly 10% (27) of our overall sample. One of them, Anas al-Mesri (a.k.a. Abu Malik) was reported killed on

September 8, 2012 during a rocket attack by regime forces in Idlib. Prior to arriving in Syria, al-Mesri had allegedly fought alongside Al-Qaida forces in Yemen under the flag of Ansar al-Shariah. Another Egyptian national killed in Syria in March 2013, Muhammad Abdul-Khaleq (a.k.a. Abu Yehya al-Mesri), gained notoriety for playing a “leading role” in various battles fought by Jabhat al-Nusra and its allies across northwest Syria. Like their Tunisian counterparts, a growing number of the Egyptians who are joining jihadi groups in Syria and who are dying there have significant links to the local branch of Ansar al-Shariah.

Also further down the list are Jordanians (11%), Lebanese (8%), Iraqis (1%), and Turks (less than 1%)—from the states immediately surrounding Syria. Here is another curious dichotomy in our results, as one would naturally expect these nationalities to be near the top of the foreign fighter demographics, especially since the distance is so close. One potential cause for this apparent discrepancy is that individuals who might otherwise attempt to join frontline fighting have been persuaded that their roles in facilitating the transport of weapons, finances, and fighters into Syria are far more important. In the case of Jordan, the government has gone to great lengths to clamp down on the recruitment of fighters by hardline Salafi groups and prevent potential spillover violence from jihadists in neighboring Syria. Conversely, it is plausible that Turkish nationals might not feel quite at home, or even welcome, among primarily Arabic-speaking rebel groups.

This is not at all meant to diminish the significance of those individuals who have traveled to Syria from these countries, because they include several virtual celebrities in the jihadi underworld. On September 2012, several top leaders of Lebanese terrorist group Fatah al-Islam were killed in fighting near the city of Homs, including one of the reputed co-founders of the group. Similarly, on January 16, 2013, Jordanian national Muhammad Yassin Jarrad was reported killed in Al-Suwayda while fighting alongside Jabhat al-Nusra. Jarrad was the brother-in-law of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the infamous late founder and leader of Al-Qaida’s network in Iraq. Jarrad’s father Yassin was also allegedly responsible for the 2003 Najaf suicide bombing operation in Iraq that killed Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, one of Iraq’s most prominent Shia Muslim leaders.

The sympathies of Palestinian Islamists for the Syrian rebel cause—despite the long and loyal assistance provided to them by the Assad regime and its allies in Hezbollah and Iran—have crumbled what was once seen by some as the most dangerous political axis in the Middle East. The eight Palestinian fighters recorded in our sample may only represent under 3% of the total, but they include personalities such as Ahmad Muhammad Quneita, who was killed in Idlib in December 2012. Quneita was a onetime member of Hamas’ armed wing, the Izzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, who later joined the militant Salafi splinter faction based in Gaza Jamaat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad. The very idea that guerilla tactics once taught to Palestinian Islamists in Hezbollah camps are now being turned around and used to kill Hezbollah’s fighters supporting Assad in Syria has caused deep schisms in the once vibrant dialogue between Hezbollah and the Palestinians.

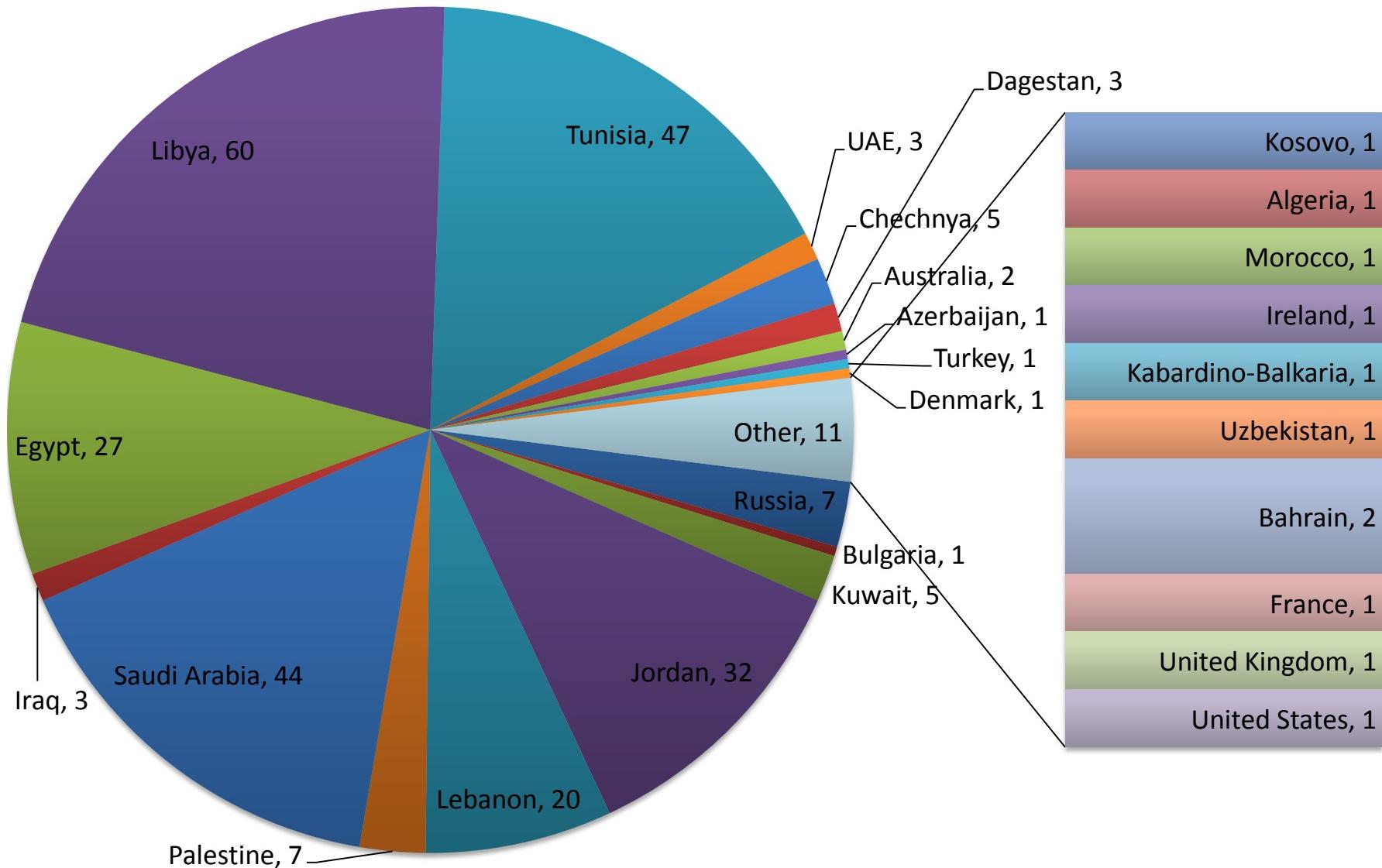
Although small in number, another figure that emerges from these statistics is the relatively surprising number of foreign fighters from Russia’s Caucasus region (9 in this sample alone, representing more than 3% of the total), including Chechnya, Dagestan, and Kabardino-Balkaria. This may partially be a function of geographic proximity and the ease of which such individuals can simply travel through Turkey into Syria. It may

also possibly be a sympathetic response to evidence that their perceived mutual enemies in Moscow have been providing critical aid and support to the Assad regime.

Another statistic derived from our data sample may be somewhat predictable, but nonetheless worrisome: the lion's share of foreign fighters who are dying in Syria are fighting with the most hardline organization involved in the uprising: Jabhat al-Nusra. The leader of Jabhat al-Nusra, Abu Mohammed al-Joulani, has recently publicly sworn allegiance to Al-Qaida leader Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri and the group has been blacklisted as a branch of Al-Qaida in Iraq by the United States government. Even if not all of those coming from outside Syria to assist the rebel cause arrive with an immediate malicious jihadi intent, if these recruits are then subject to sectarian indoctrination by the likes of Jabhat al-Nusra and the rigors of urban combat with a foe like the Assad regime and its Hezbollah allies, it is fair to say that all bets are off. This is particularly concerning when one considers that a handful of Western nationals—including at least one American, Eric Harroun—have already allegedly fought alongside Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria. In our own data set, at least seven Europeans (not including Kosovo) were counted as casualties of the Syrian resistance from France, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Ireland—plus an additional two from Australia and one from the United States. Even given these relatively small numbers, it would seem that the concern of Western governments that errant extremists from their countries will receive paramilitary training in Syria appears to be indeed borne out by the evidence. In this regard, it is worth noting the recent case of an alleged plot uncovered by authorities in Belgium by a group of local militants who had fought in Syria and, upon their return, began planning a terrorist attack in Brussels. While we must be careful not to exaggerate the potential threat, some of these diehards may inevitably end up spawning into our deepest fears.

# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: By Country of Origin

As of May 30, 2013



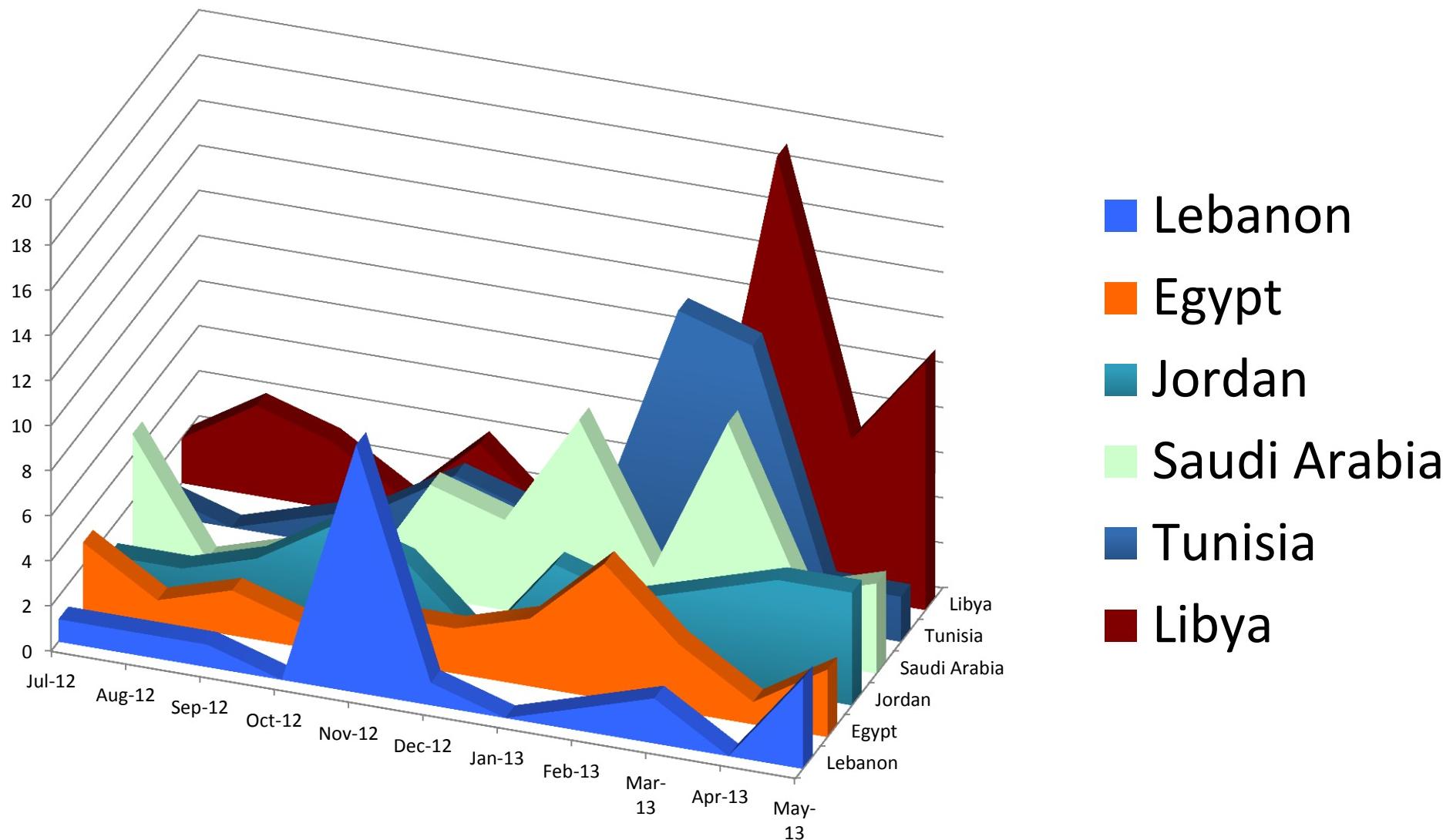
# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: By Country of Origin

As of May 30, 2013

	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Unknown	TOTAL	PERCENT
Libya	2	4	3	1	4	1	3	3	19	7	11	1	59	21.07%
Saudi Arabia	5	.	1	.	5	4	9	3	10	3	4	-	44	15.71%
Tunisia	1	.	1	2	4	3	4	13	12	2	2	-	44	15.71%
Jordan	1	1	2	4	3	.	4	3	4	5	5	-	32	11.43%
Egypt	3	1	2	1	2	2	3	6	3	1	3	-	27	9.64%
Lebanon	1	1	1	.	11	1	.	1	2	.	4	-	22	7.86%
Palestine	1	.	.	2	.	1	3	1	.	.	.	-	8	2.86%
Russia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1	.	.	4	7	2.50%
Chechnya	.	1	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	-	5	1.79%
Dagestan	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	1	1	-	4	1.43%
Kuwait	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	1	-	-	3	1.07%
Iraq	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	-	3	1.07%
UAE	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	2	.	.	-	3	1.07%
Australia	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	-	2	0.71%
Bahrain	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	-	2	0.71%
Morocco	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	-	2	0.71%
Algeria	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	-	1	0.36%
Azerbaijan	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	-	1	0.36%
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0.36%
Denmark	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	-	1	0.36%
France	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	-	--	1	0.36%
Ireland	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	-	1	0.36%
Kabardino-Balkaria	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	-	1	0.36%
Kosovo	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	-	1	0.36%
Qatar	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	-	1	0.36%
Turkey	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	-	1	0.36%
United Kingdom	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	-	1	0.36%
United States	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	-	1	0.36%
Uzbekistan	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	0.36%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	14	10	11	13	30	13	27	36	59	23	37	7	280	

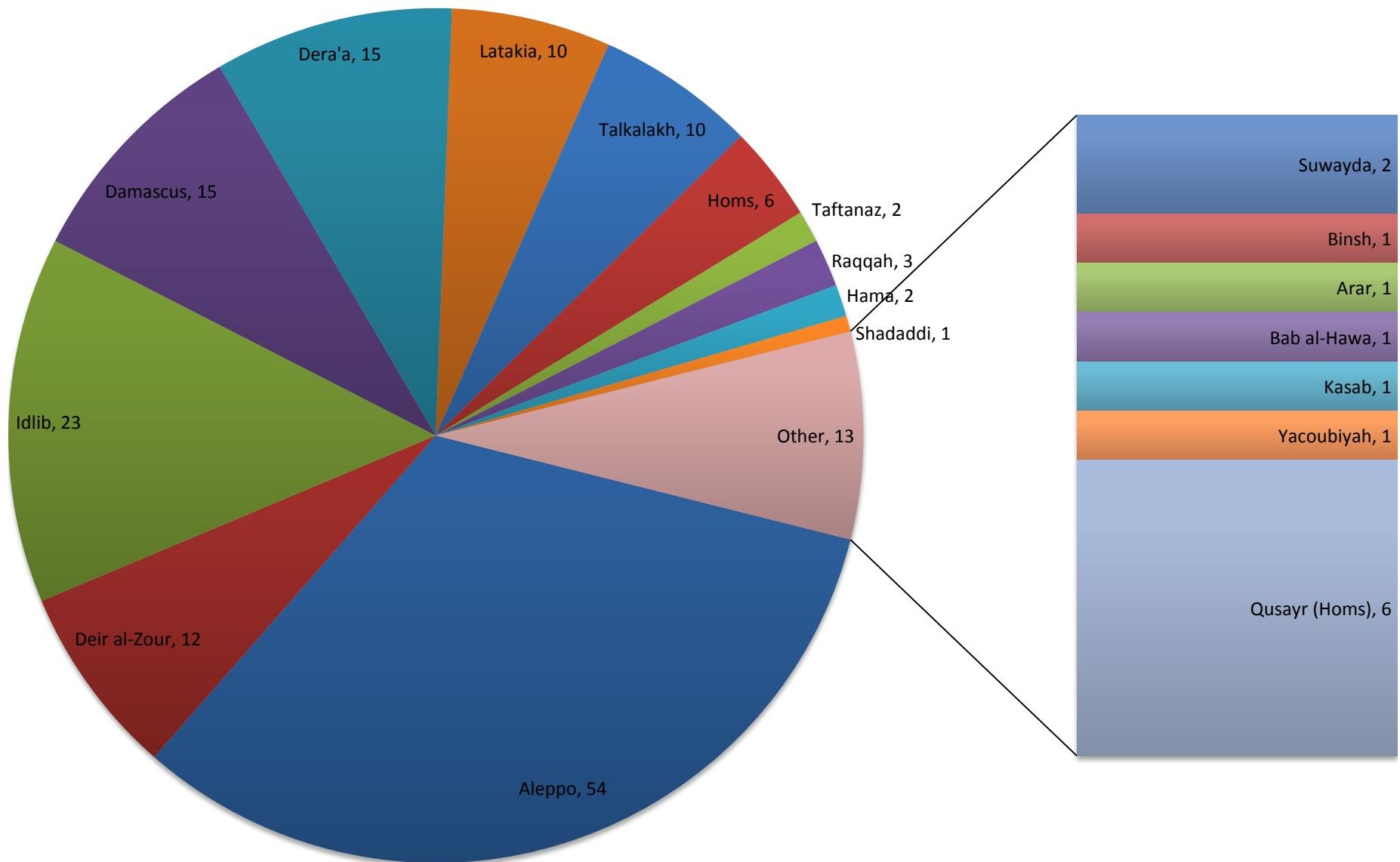
# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: By Country of Origin

As of May 30, 2013



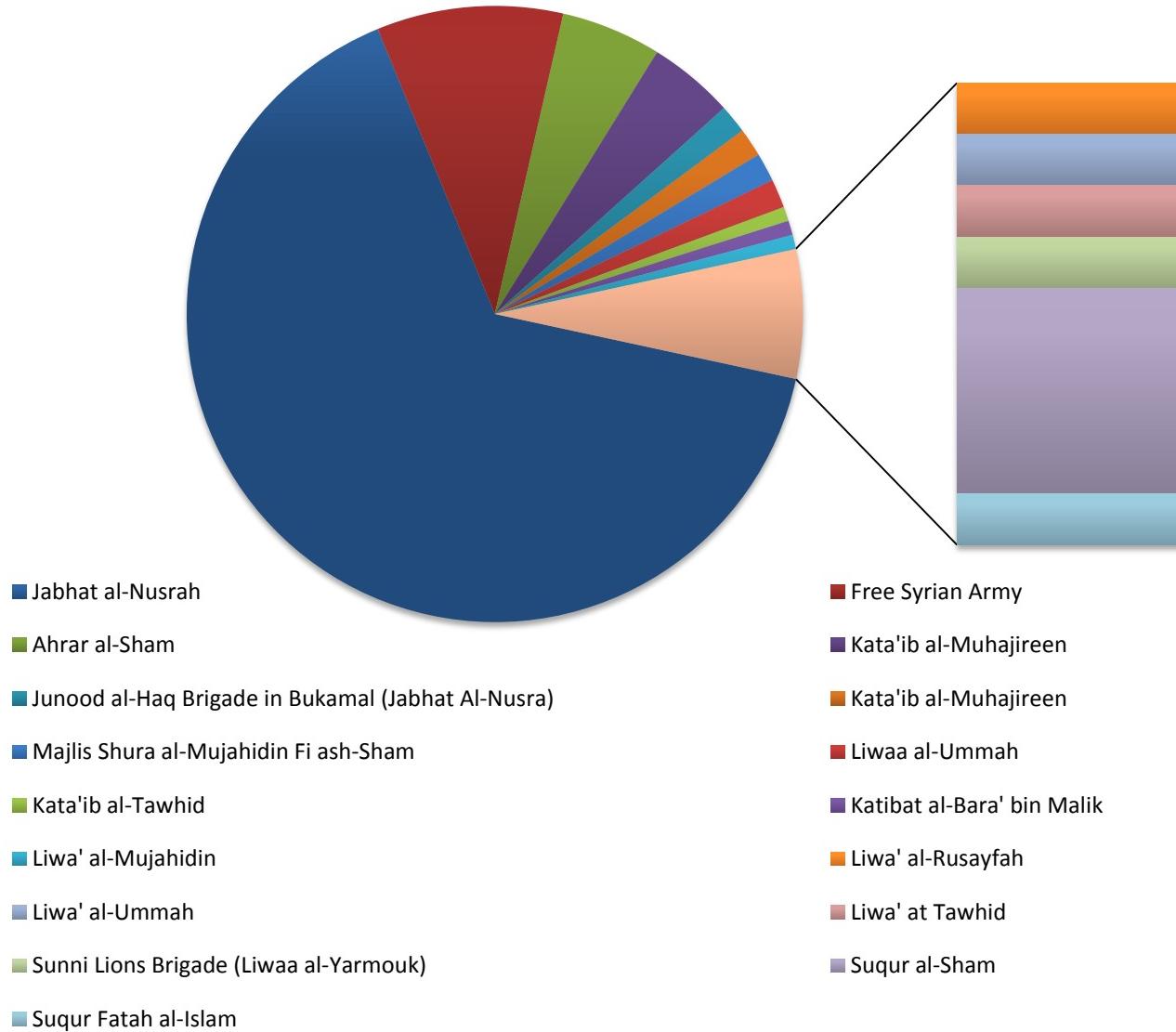
# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: By Place of Death

As of May 30, 2013



# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: By Group Affiliation

As of May 30, 2013



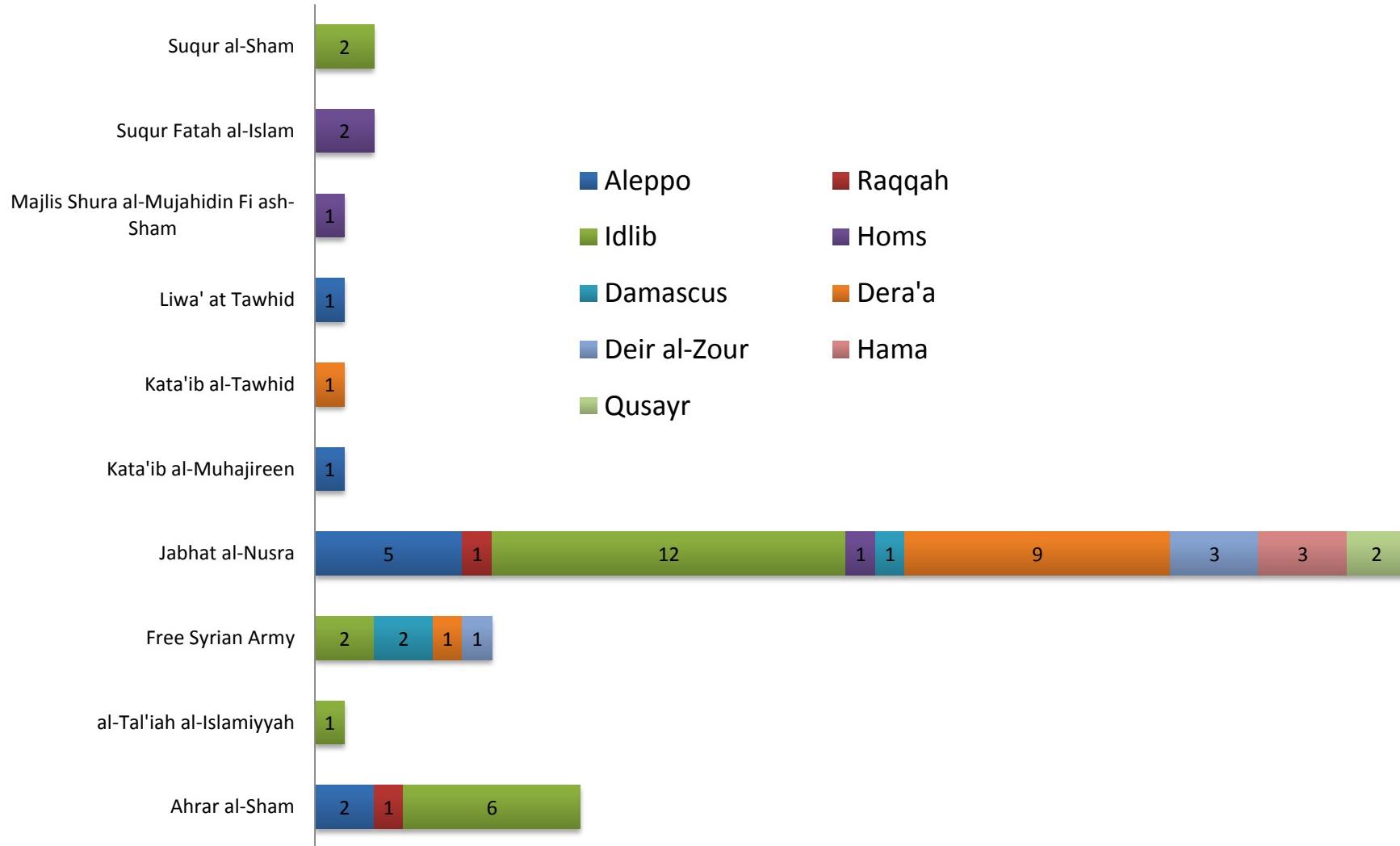
# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: By Group Affiliation

As of May 30, 2013

<b>Jabhat al-Nusrah</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>31.07%</b>
<b>Free Syrian Army</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4.64%</b>
<b>Ahrar al-Sham</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2.50%</b>
<b>Jaish al-Muhajirin and Ansar</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2.14%</b>
<b>Suqur al-Sham</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.43%</b>
<b>Junood al-Haq Brigade in Bukamal (Jabhat Al-Nusrah)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.71%</b>
<b>Liwaa al-Ummah</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.71%</b>
<b>Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin Fi ash-Sham</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.71%</b>
<b>Katibat al-Bara' bin Malik</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.36%</b>
<b>Kata'ib al-Tawhid</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.36%</b>
<b>Liwa' al-Mujahidin</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.36%</b>
<b>Liwa' al-Rusayfah</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.36%</b>
<b>Liwa' al-Ummah</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.36%</b>
<b>Liwa' at Tawhid</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.36%</b>
<b>Sunni Lions Brigade (Liwaa al-Yarmouk)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.36%</b>
<b>Suqur Fatah al-Islam</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.36%</b>

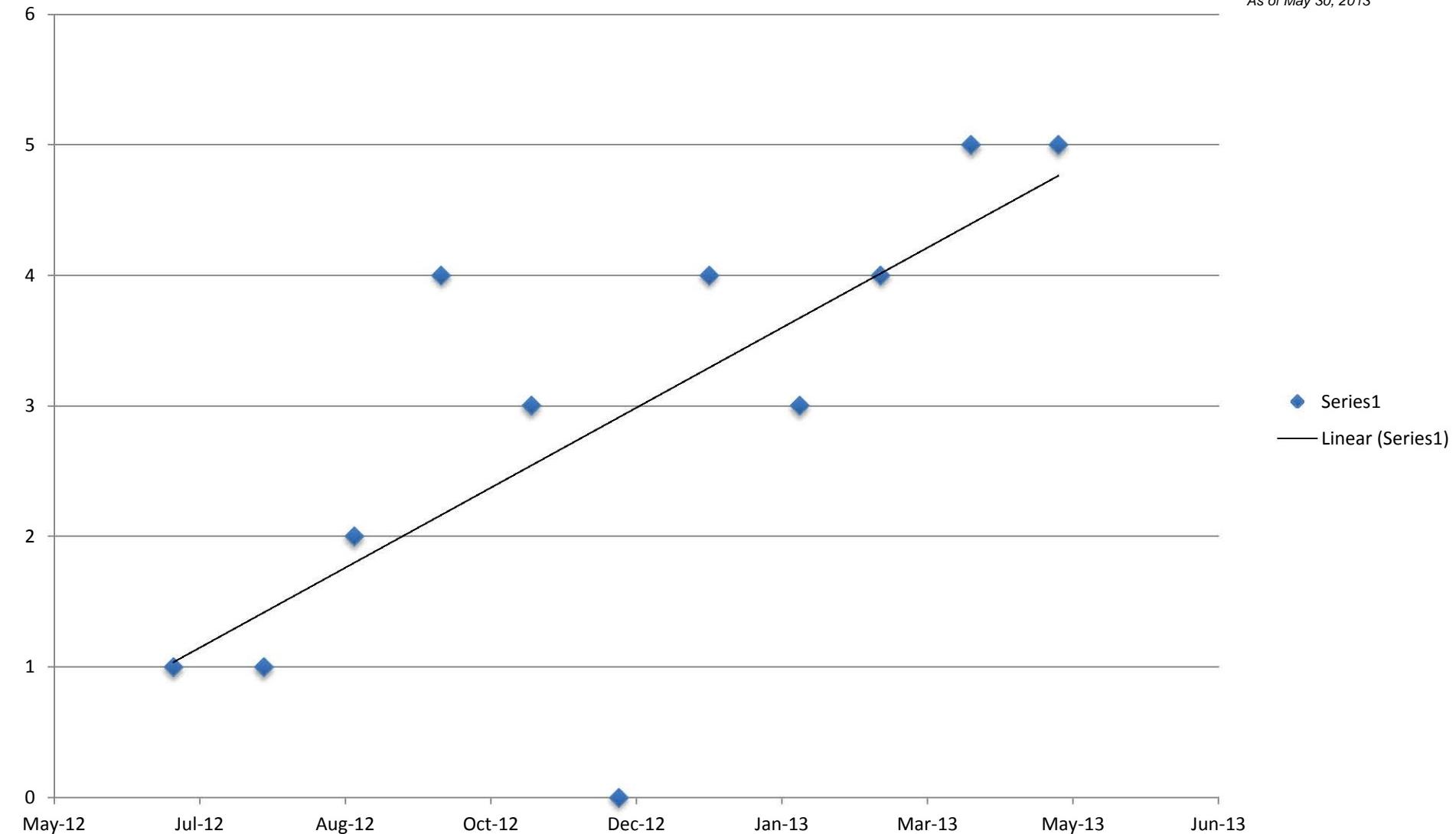
# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: Overlaying Group Affiliation and Place of Death

As of May 30, 2013



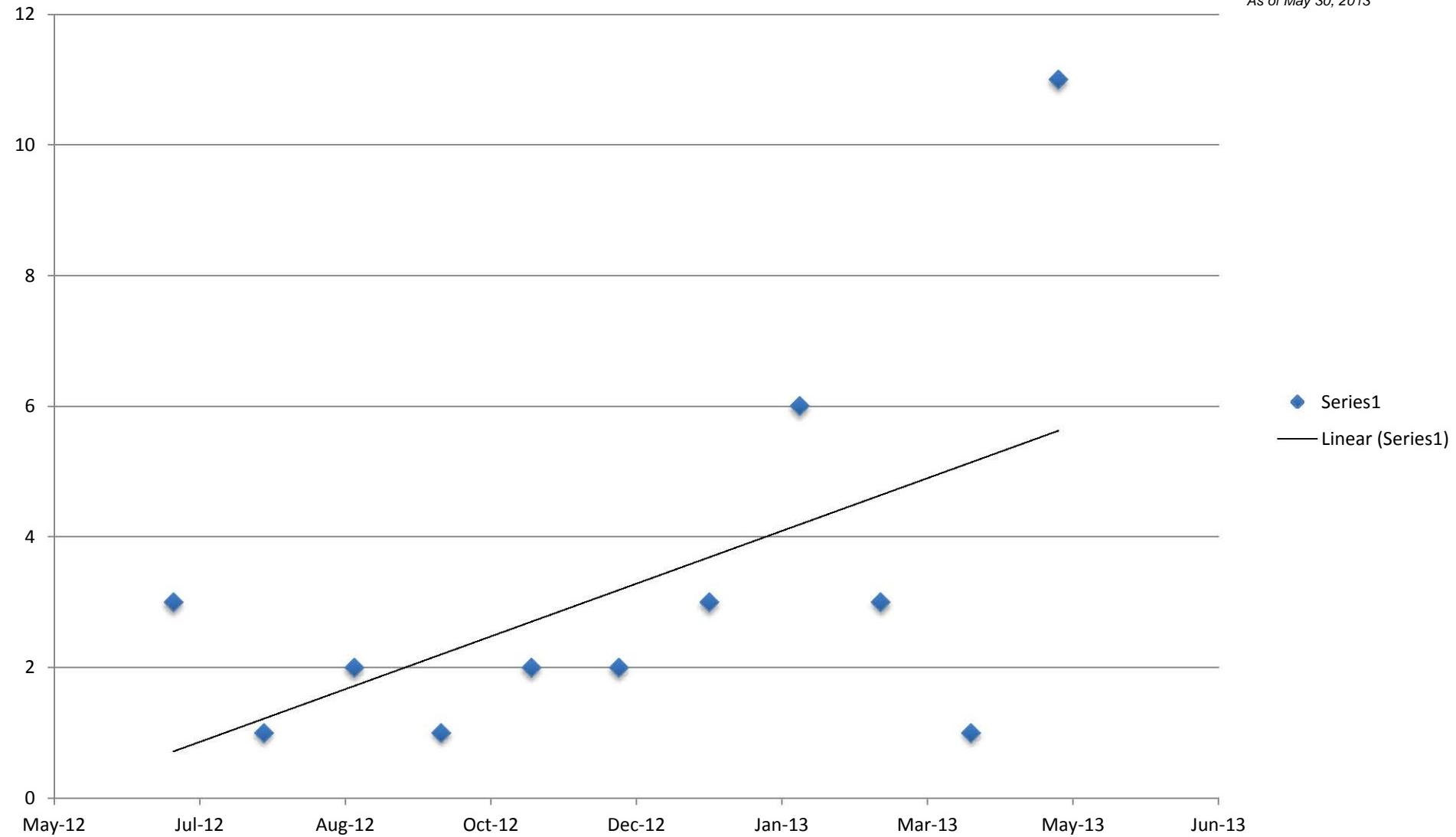
# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: Trends in the Number of Casualties of Jordanian Fighters

As of May 30, 2013



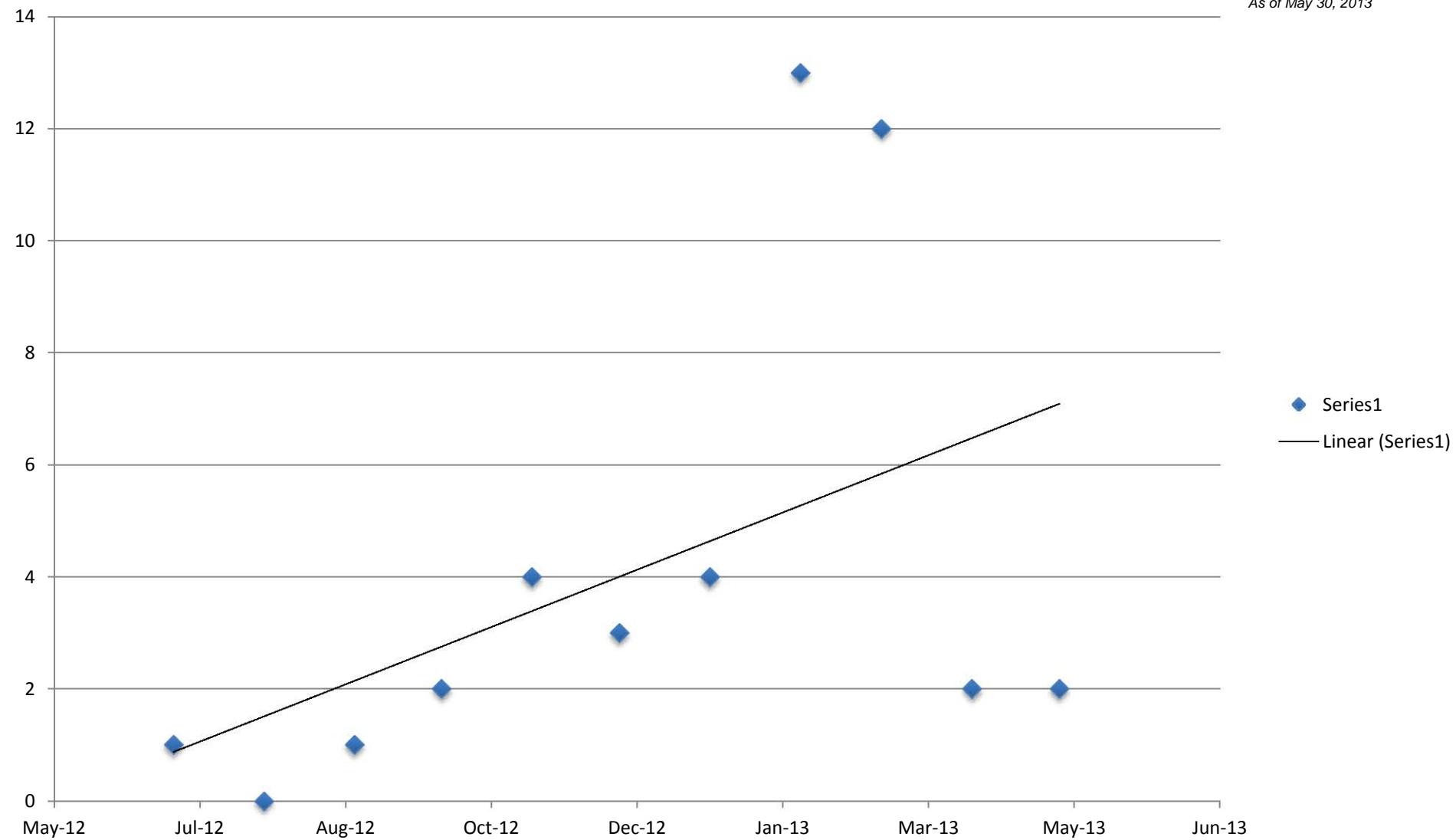
# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: Trends in the Number of Casualties of Libyan Fighters

As of May 30, 2013



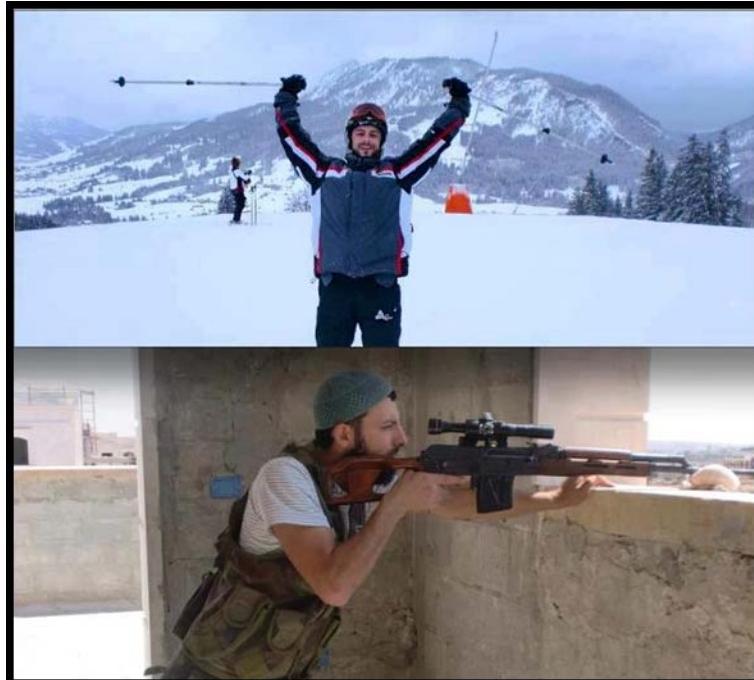
# Convoy of Martyrs in the Levant: Trends in the Number of Casualties of Tunisian Fighters

As of May 30, 2013



## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### **Hussam ad-Din al-Armnazi (Abu ‘Umar Hussam ad-Din al-Halabi) Date of Death: 7/31/2012**



**Country of Origin**  
Aleppo, Syria

**Location Killed**  
Aleppo

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Liwaa at-Tawhid

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
N/A

**Transit Country**  
Turkey

**Prior Profession**  
Medical Student (Germany)

#### **Additional Background**

Originally from Syria, al-Armanazi left medical school in Germany to join the rebellion. He attended the Sa’adallah al-Jabri Square protests in March 2011. He was arrested the next day and held in prison for two months. After his release, al-Armanazi returned to Germany and assisted with online activity supporting the local committees in Aleppo. He returned again to Syria, and fought in Idlib and Aleppo before his death.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Rustam Gelayev

Date of Death: 8/11/2012 – 8/13/2012



**Country of Origin**

Komsomolskoye, Chechnya

**Location Killed**

Unknown

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**

Unknown

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**

Chechen Mujahideen

**Transit Country**

“By way of [the] Mid East”

**Prior Profession**

Islamic Studies Student, Fighter

**Additional Background**

Gelayev was born in 1988 and participated in the second Chechen War against Russian forces. He was reported to be the son of Chechen Amir Khamzat (a.k.a. Ruslan) Gelayev. He studied Sharia in the Middle East. After his death, his body was returned to Chechnya to be buried.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Anas al-Mesri (Abu Malik) Date of Death: 9/8/2012

**Country of Origin**

Egypt

**Location Killed**

Idlib

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**

Unknown

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**

AQAP /Ansar al-Sharia, Yemen

**Transit Country**

Yemen

**Prior Profession**

Unknown

**Additional Background**

Al-Masri previously fought in Yemen before traveling to Syria. He was killed by regime forces in a rocket attack.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Hussein al-Sharif al-Darwish (Abu Qasswara al-Shami / Abu Dujana al-Halabi) Date of Death: 9/22/2012

**Country of Origin**

Lebanon

**Location Killed**

Homs

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**

Suqur Fatah al-Islam

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**

Fatah al-Islam (Lebanon)

**Transit Country**

Yemen

**Prior Profession**

Unknown

**Additional Background**

Prior to his death, al-Darwish was the Amir of Suqur Fatah al-Islam. Three of his brothers and a nephew were also killed. Al-Darwish was known to be close to the Amir of Fatah al-Islam in Tripoli.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### **Nu'man Demolli (Abu Aaesha)**

**Date of Death: 11/8/2012**



**Country of Origin**  
Prishtina, Kosovo

**Location Killed**  
Homs

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Jabhat al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
Kosovar Mujahideen

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

**Prior Profession**  
Kosovo Liberation Army Soldier

#### **Additional Background**

Demolli fought with the KLA in 1999 and helped build the Grand Mosque in Prishtina. He was reportedly the head of the “Commandos Unit” of Jabhat al-Nusra. After his death, Jabhat al-Nusra named the attack on the French hospital “The battle of Abu Aaesha.”

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### **Abdulaziz al-Jughayman (Abu Leen) Date of Death: 11/24/2012**



**Country of Origin**  
Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia

**Location Killed**  
Idlib

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Jabhat al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
Afghan, Kashmiri, Bosnian  
Mujahideen

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

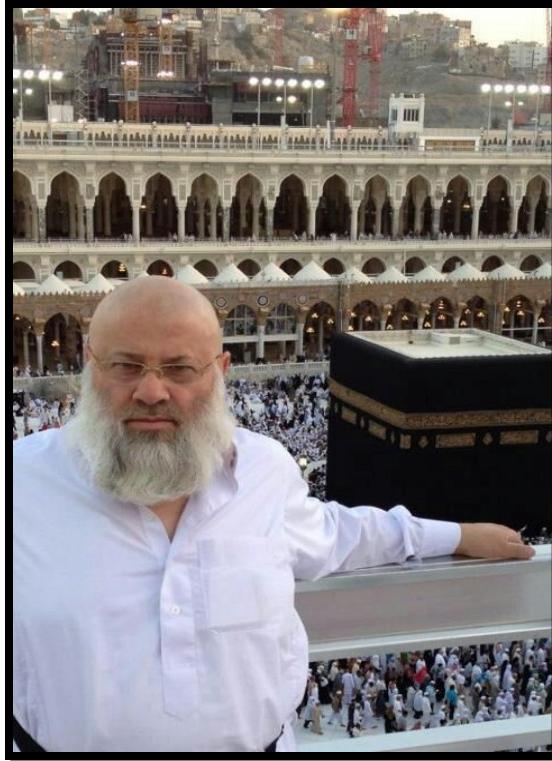
**Prior Profession**  
Asst. Professor of Sharia

#### **Additional Background**

Al-Jughayman is a former professor at King Faisal University in al-Ahsa. He is a veteran of the conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kashmir. He reportedly fought in Afghanistan immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. After fleeing Afghanistan in 2002, al-Jughayman was captured by Syrian authorities and imprisoned for approximately 3 years.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### **Jamal al-Yafi (Muhab Ru'yat al-Rahman) Date of Death: 12/9/2012**



**Country of Origin**  
Tripoli, Lebanon

**Location Killed**  
Unknown

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Unknown

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
Afghan Mujahideen

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

**Prior Profession**  
Unknown

#### **Additional Background**

Al-Yafi was a well-known and prolific contributor to top-tier Al-Qaida forums with over 30,000 postings. He incited online extremists to join various jihadi groups, and shared details from his experience as a fighter in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Ahmad Muhammad Quneita (Abu ‘Umar al-Maqdisi, al-Saqr) Date of Death: 12/26/2012



**Country of Origin**  
Gaza, Palestine

**Location Killed**  
Idlib

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Jabhat al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
Gaza Salafists, Hamas,  
Chechnya

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

**Prior Profession**  
Unknown

#### Additional Background

Qanitah also fought with the Qassam Brigades and Jama’at al-Tawhid wa-I-Jihad (JTJW). He has featured in JTJW propaganda and joined the jihad in Syria during ‘Id al-Fitr in 2012.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### **Khalid al-Mansuri al-Ubaydi (Abu al-Maouz) Date of Death: 1/11/2013**



**Country of Origin**  
Derna, Libya

**Location Killed**  
Taftanaz

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Unknown

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
Iraq, Libya

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

**Prior Profession**  
Unknown

#### **Additional Background**

Al-Ubaydi previously attempted to join the jihad in Iraq, but was arrested on his way out of Libya. He was held in the infamous Abu Salim prison until 2009, when he was released as part of the Ramadan amnesty. During the Libyan Revolution he joined the resistance in Sirte and fought with the Libyan al-Battar Brigade.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Muhammad Yassin Jarrad

Date of Death: 1/16/2013



**Country of Origin**

Zarqa', Jordan

**Location Killed**

Al-Suwayda

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**

Jabhat al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**

Iraq, Libya

**Transit Country**

Unknown

**Prior Profession**

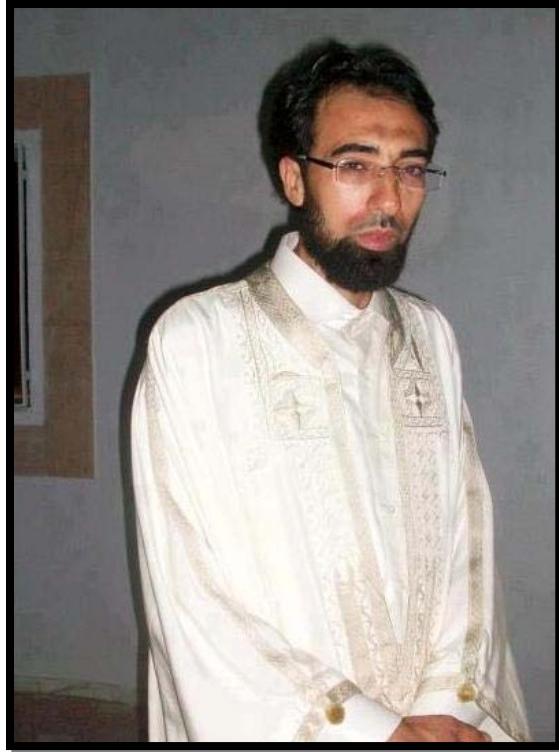
Unknown

**Additional Background**

Jarrad is the brother-in-law of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the late leader of Al-Qaida in Iraq. His father Yassin was behind the 2003 Najaf operation that killed Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, one of Iraq's most prominent Shia Muslim leaders.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### **Muhammad Amin Abdul-Hadi (Abu Abdullah al-Sfaxi al-Tunisi) Date of Death: 1/27/2013**



**Country of Origin**  
Sfax, Tunisia

**Location Killed**  
Latakia

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Jabhat al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
N/A

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

**Prior Profession**  
Engineer

#### **Additional Background**

Al-Hadi worked at the Center of Studies and Research for Telecommunications for 10 years and was considered well off. He was killed during an attack on Syrian Army forces.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Ilyas bin Hamad bin ‘Umara (Abu Hasan al-Tunisi) Date of Death: 1/31/2013



**Country of Origin**  
Mahdia, Tunisia

**Location Killed**  
Binnish

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Jabhat al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
N/A

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

**Prior Profession**  
Engineer

#### Additional Background

Ilyas Umara joined the Syrian jihad two months after graduating with an engineering degree from the Higher Institute of Informatics in Ariana, Tunisia, in September 2012. At the time of his death, he was 25 years old. Umara was active in Syrian relief campaigns, specifically distributing medicine.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Abu Jihad al-Jaza'iri

Date of Death: 2/6/2013

**Country of Origin**

Algeria

**Location Killed**

Idlib

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**

Jabhat Al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**

N/A

**Transit Country**

Unknown

**Prior Profession**

Unknown

**Additional Background**

Al-Jaza'iri was a jihadi web forum user who was well known and respected in the online extremist community.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Abu Sa'd al-Liby

Date of Death: 2/8/2013

**Country of Origin**

Tunisia

**Location Killed**

Unknown

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**

Unknown

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**

Afghanistan

**Transit Country**

Unknown

**Prior Profession**

Unknown

**Additional Background**

Al-Libi had joined the jihad in Afghanistan and was also detained in Iran. During the Arab Spring, he attempted to travel to Yemen to join Al-Qaida. However, he was caught and arrested in Oman. He remained in Omani custody for approximately a month before being transferred to Dubai, and interrogated by the U.S. military. He was later returned to Tunisia, and then traveled to Syria.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### **Hamdi al-Thawadi (Hamdi al-Tunisi) Date of Death: 2/19/2013**



**Country of Origin**  
Tunis, Tunisia

**Location Killed**  
Unknown

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Jabhat al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
N/A

**Transit Country**  
Turkey

**Prior Profession**  
Engineer

#### **Additional Background**

Al-Thawadi previously attempted to travel to Iraq to fight, but was arrested and held for 5 years. Later, he traveled to Turkey and Egypt, and studied at the Preparatory Institute for Engineering Studies in Manar. He attempted to join the Syrian revolution in 2012, but, after reaching Turkey, was forced to return to Tunisia. He crossed into Syria via Turkey in February 2013.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Khalid al-Suwayd Date of Death: 3/21/2013

**Country of Origin**

Saudi Arabia

**Location Killed**

Ghassouleh, Damascus

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**

Unknown

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**

Iraq, Al Qaeda

**Transit Country**

Unknown

**Prior Profession**

N/A

**Additional Background**

Al-Suwayd previously fought in Iraq against U.S. forces, presumably for Al-Qaida. He fought in eastern Ghouta, Syria, before joining the fight in Damascus. In his final attack, he took part in a suicide style assault that is alleged to have killed 50-60 soldiers before the small multi-national force he was with was killed.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### **Muhammad Abdul-Khaleq** (Abu Yehya al-Mesri) Date of Death: 3/29/2013

**Country of Origin**

Egypt

**Location Killed**

Unknown

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar ash-Sham  
Brigade**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**

N/A

**Transit Country**

Unknown

**Prior Profession**

Engineer

**Additional Background**

Abdulkhaleq played a leading role in the military operations of Jabhat al-Nusra before his death. He fought on many fronts in Syria with factions of Jabhat al-Nusra and the Ahrar ash-Sham Brigades, to include: Baba Amro, the Aleppo-Damascus Highway, Tal Othman, Tal al-Hamiyat, Shalish, al-Shanabreh, and Tal al-Maqsus.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Shaykh Abu Adam al-Maghrebi Date of Death: 4/7/2013



**Country of Origin**  
Morocco/Spain

**Location Killed**  
Aleppo

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Unknown

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
N/A

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

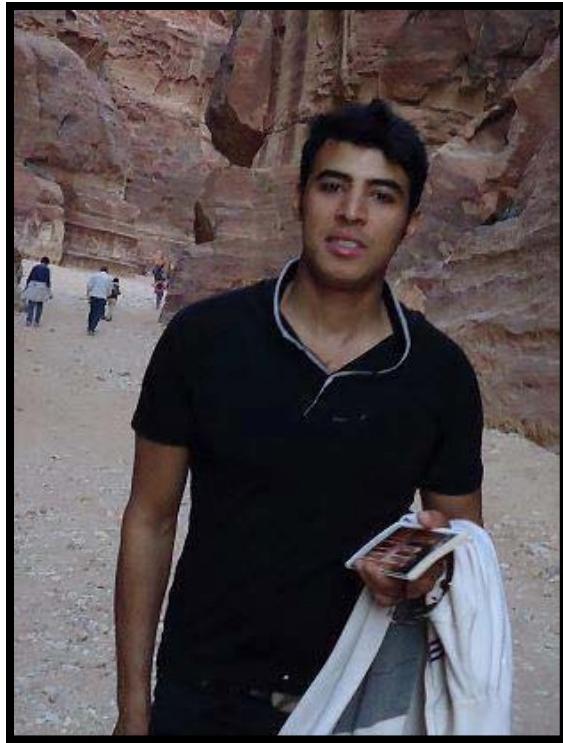
**Prior Profession**  
Businessman

#### **Additional Background**

Al-Maghrebi was reportedly 55 years old with a heart condition, and had heart surgery before departing for Syria. He participated in many battles in Aleppo before being shot in the heart in an assault on Aleppo International Airport.

## Appendix – Select Martyr Biographies

### Hussam Muhammad Younis ‘Eshteiwi Date of Death: 4/17/2013



**Country of Origin**  
Benghazi, Libya

**Location Killed**  
Unknown

**Syrian Resistance Affiliation**  
Jabhat al-Nusra

**Prior Jihadist Affiliations**  
Libyan Revolution

**Transit Country**  
Unknown

**Prior Profession**  
Pharmacist

#### Additional Background

Eshteiwi reportedly graduated from Al-Arab Medical University. He was injured while participating in the Libyan revolution, and sought treatment in Jordan. After recovering, he spent some time in Tunisia before traveling to Syria.